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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/650,376	08/29/2003	Carl E. Fabian	0018-13	7325
25901	7590	11/29/2007		
ERNEST D. BUFF			EXAMINER	
ERNEST D. BUFF AND ASSOCIATES, LLC.			BOGART, MICHAEL G	
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BEDMINSTER, NJ 07921			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3761	
			MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
			11/29/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/650,376

Applicant(s)

FABIAN, CARL E.

Examiner

Michael G. Bogart

Art Unit

3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 31 August 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6, 11, 13, 14 and 17-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6, 11, 13, 14 and 17-19 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 29 August 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Request for Continued Examination

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 31 August 2007 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

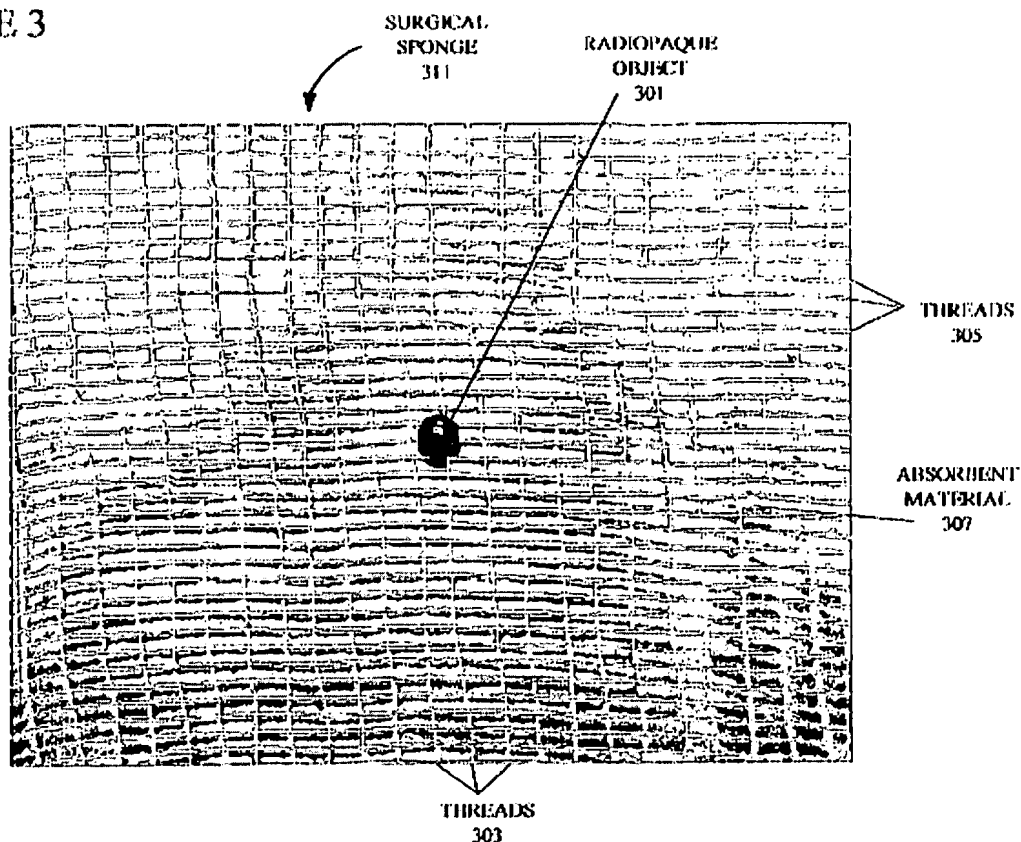
(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-6 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ballard (US 6,777,623 B2) in view of Kliger (US 3,911,922).

Regarding claims 1-6, Ballard teaches a surgical sponge (311) comprising:

a spherical radiopaque marker (301), said marker being fixed to the sponge (311), said marker (301) being made of barium sulfate (col. 5, lines 10-63)(see fig. 3, *infra*). The spherical marker (301) provides a distinctive, visually recognizable shape.

FIGURE 3

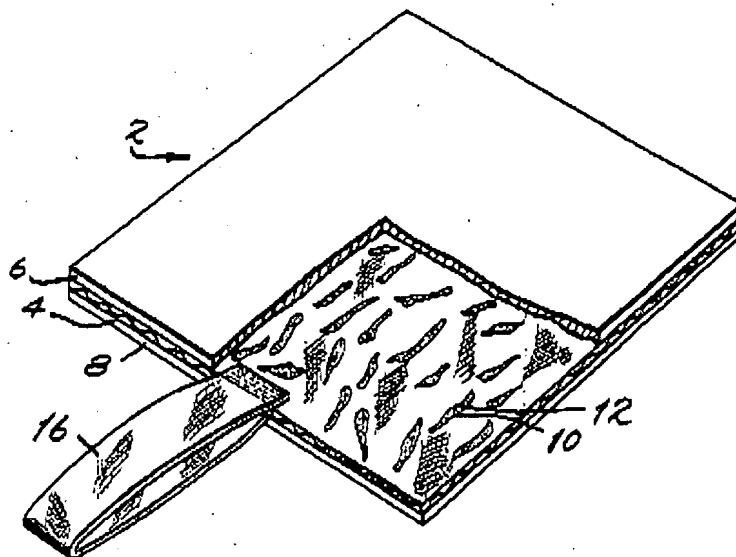


Ballard does not teach a plurality of markers.

Kliger teaches a surgical sponge having three markers (12) that are proximate each other (see fig. 1, *infra*). The multiple markers increase the surface area that can be detected by an X-ray (col. 3, lines 33-45). The term “proximate” is herein interpreted as meaning “near”. See definition provided by *die.net* (<http://dict.die.net/proximate>).

All the claimed elements were known in the prior art and one skilled in the art could have combined the elements as claimed by known methods with no change in their respective functions, and the combination would have yielded predictable results to one of ordinary skill in

the art at the time of the invention. *KSR International Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 550 U.S. ___, 82 USPQ2d 1385, 1396 (2007).



Ballard and Kliger do not disclose expressly the specific X-ray density or size of the markers.

Mere changes in size, weight or shape are not sufficient to patentably distinguish an invention over the prior art. *In re Rose*, 220 F.2d 459, 105 USPQ 237 (CCPA 1955) (Claims directed to a lumber package "of appreciable size and weight requiring handling by a lift truck" where held unpatentable over prior art lumber packages which could be lifted by hand because limitations relating to the size of the package were not sufficient to patentably distinguish over the prior art.); *In re Rinehart*, 531 F.2d 1048, 189 USPQ 143 (CCPA 1976) ("mere scaling up of a prior art process capable of being scaled up, if such were the case, would not establish patentability in a claim to an old process so scaled." 531 F.2d at 1053, 189 USPQ at 148.). See

In re Dailey, 357 F.2d 669, 149 USPQ 47 (CCPA 1966) (The court held that the configuration of the claimed disposable plastic nursing container was a matter of choice which a person of ordinary skill in the art would have found obvious absent persuasive evidence that the particular configuration of the claimed container was significant.).

Regarding claim 17, Kliger teaches that the three markers (12) are contiguous (see figure 1, supra). As interpreted herein, “contiguous” is construed as being neighboring or adjacent. See definitions of contiguous provided by *Encarta* (http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_1861599914/contiguous.html) and *The Free Dictionary by Farlex* (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/contiguous>). The words of a claim must be given their “plain meaning” unless such meaning is inconsistent with the specification. MPEP § 2111.01. Applicants’ specification does not provide a definition of “contiguous” that is contrary to elements that are neighboring or adjacent.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ballard and Kliger as applied to claims 1-6 and 17 above, and further in view of Ishikawa *et al.* (US 6,366,206 B1; hereinafter “Ishikawa”).

Ballard and Kliger do not teach an electronic tag.

Ishikawa teaches a surgical sponge (101) with an electric transponder (15)(see fig. 7, below).

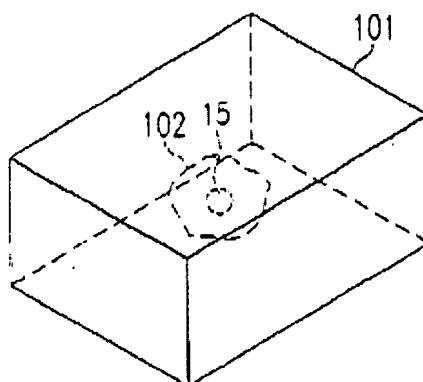


FIG. 7

At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to add the electronic transponder of Ishikawa to the surgical sponge of Ballard and Kliger in order to provide a remote means of tracking the sponge (abstract; col. 8, lines 42-51).

Claims 13, 14, 18 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ballard and Kliger as applied to claims 1-6 and 17 above, and further in view of *Uncommon Peril of Forgotten Surgical Tools*, Davis Grady, The New York Times, Jan. 21, 2003 (hereinafter "*Uncommon Peril*").

Ballard and Kliger do not disclose expressly the steps of x-raying a patient and removing a surgical sponge thereafter.

Uncommon Peril teaches that a patient suspected of having a surgical sponge or other implement having a marker inside them can be x-rayed and if the implement is found to be there, it can be removed.

Regarding claim 18 and 19, Kliger teaches that the three markers (12) are contiguous (see figure 1, supra). As interpreted herein, "contiguous" is construed as being neighboring or adjacent.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-6, 11, 13, 14, 18 and 19 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Bogart whose telephone number is (571) 272-4933.

In the event the examiner is not available, the Examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva may be reached at phone number (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300 for formal communications. For informal communications, the direct fax to the Examiner is (571) 273-4933.

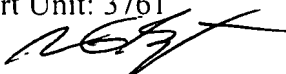
Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-3700.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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Michael Bogart

23 November 2007

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Tatyana Zalukaeva, Ph.D.
Primary Examiner

